

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE GED

What are the benefits of earning a GED credential?

- Among the many benefits of the GED testing program, passing the GED Tests provides an opportunity for adults to continue their education. In fact, 95 percent of U.S. colleges and universities accept GED graduates who meet their other qualifications for admission, according to the College Board.
- A GED credential documents that you have high school-level academic skills. About 96 percent of U.S. employers accept the GED credential as equal to a traditional high school diploma, according to recent studies.

Who is eligible to take the GED Tests?

- You may take the GED Tests if:
- You are not enrolled in high school, and
- You have not graduated from high school, and
- You are at least age 16, and
- You meet state, provincial, or territorial requirements regarding age, residency, and the length of time since leaving school.
- If you are considering leaving high school, the GED Testing Service recommends that you first meet with your high school counselor to talk seriously about your decision and the level of academic skill needed to pass the GED Tests.
- Free [publications](#) are available to help in providing information about the tests. Check with your State (ged@sde.state.id.us) for information about testing.

What do I have to do to pass the GED Tests?

- You have to be able to read, compute, interpret information, and express yourself in writing on a level comparable to that of 60 percent of graduating high school seniors. If you are uncertain whether you have the level of skill needed to successfully complete the tests, you can find out more about your abilities in several ways. Many programs are sponsored by local school districts, colleges, and community organizations. Teachers and tutors in these programs can tell you whether you need intensive preparation or a quick “brush up.”
- **Adult education and GED preparation classes**
(Check your local telephone listings)
- **Self-study**
 - Your local bookstore or library carries GED and pre-GED preparation texts
 - Your local public television station may carry “GED Connection”
- **Call (800) 62-MY-GED for**
 - A referral to a local GED preparation program or testing site
 - An information brochure, and/or
 - A self-scoring version of the [practice tests](#); and
 - Locating your state, province, or territory’s contact person for GED instruction

Should I study for the GED Tests?

- Preparation is an essential part of any important examination. You probably have gained some knowledge and skills thorough life experience, reading, and

informal training, but remember that the GED Tests are a rigorous battery of five tests that take more than seven and a half hours to complete. Regardless of your ability, you'll be more certain to perform your best on the tests if you know what to expect before the testing day arrives.

How much time does it take to complete the GED Tests?

- The battery of five GED Tests takes 7 hours and 5 minutes to complete. In some areas, you must take the entire battery of tests in one or two sittings. Other places permit you to take a single test each time you come to the testing center and may offer testing in the evenings. It may take up to several weeks for your scores to be reported back to you. Check with ged@sde.state.id.us to find out about testing procedures in your area.

Where do I go to take the GED Tests?

- There are approximately 3,400 [official GED Testing Centers](#) in the United States, Canada, and their territories. They are usually operated by local school boards, adult education centers, and/or community colleges.
- Check your local telephone listings under the headings listed above.
- Call (800) 62-MY GED (800-626-9433).
- Check with your ged@sde.state.id.us for GED testing.
- If you live outside the United States, Canada, or their territories, you may be able to take the GED Tests at a testing facility operated by [Prometric](#). Contact the regional registration center nearest you for specific information about testing locations and procedures.

How much does it cost to take the GED Tests?

- The cost of taking the GED Tests in Idaho is \$90. That breaks down to \$15 per test and a one-time \$15 processing fee.
- One on-line course through Idaho's Virtual Academy is \$100. For \$90, you'll have the equivalent of the entire high school course work.
- Check with ged@sde.state.id.us for your local [official GED Testing Center](#) to find out about how to register for testing.
- To find out about fees outside the United States, contact [Prometric](#).

What do my scores mean?

- Your official GED transcript contains two sets of numbers: standard scores and percentile ranks. The standard scores make it possible to compare scores across tests and test forms. This is necessary because some tests contain a different number of questions and there are many forms of the GED Tests in circulation, all of them equally difficult.
- The percentile rank makes it possible to compare your performance on each one of the tests with the performance of graduating high school seniors. The higher the percentile rank, the better your performance.
- *Example:* Kelly's total score after completing all five of the GED Tests is 2,850; her average standard score is 570. The percentile rank for that score is 77. The percentile rank of "77" means that Kelly has outperformed 77 out of 100 graduating high school seniors. Such a score places Kelly in the top 25 percent

(100-77=23) of graduating U.S. high school seniors in terms of her general academic skills and knowledge.

How do you convert GED test scores to a GPA?

- Letter grades (A, B, C, etc.) are not standardized across every high school; that is, an "A" student at one high school may be a "C" student at a more rigorous high school. Therefore, we cannot equate GED test scores to a GPA. We can provide a national percentile rank that tells you where a GED candidate stands in relation to graduating high school seniors.

What if I don't pass all the tests the first time?

- You can take one or more of the tests again. However, note that many jurisdictions have special requirements for candidates who don't pass the GED Tests the first time. You may be required to wait several months or show proof of attending a preparation course before you're permitted to re-test. You may also have to pay an additional fee. For the specific regulations in your area, check with ged@sde.state.id.us

What makes a GED credential "equivalent?"

- The GED Tests are developed using specifications established by experienced secondary school and adult educators and are reviewed by subject matter experts. Every test question is subjected to multiple reviews by test specialists and external content specialists, and is pretested before becoming part of a final test form. The GED Tests are also standardized and normed using a national stratified random sample of graduating high school seniors. In order to pass the tests, the GED candidate must demonstrate a level of skill that meets or surpasses that demonstrated by approximately 60 percent of graduating high school seniors.

How many questions do I need to get right on each of the GED Tests to earn the 410 passing score?

- Each correct answer is worth one point. For each individual GED test, these points are totaled and then converted to a standard score, which ranges from 200 to 800. Candidates need a standard score of 410 in order to pass each of the individual GED Tests and an overall average score of 450 for the five-test battery. To receive a 410 standard score on an individual GED test, candidates generally need to answer 60 to 65 percent of the questions correctly.

Will passing the GED Tests get me into college?

- About 95 percent of U.S. colleges and universities accept GED graduates in the same manner as high school graduates. GED graduates are also eligible for most federal financial aid if they meet the program's other criteria. After earning your GED credential, sign up to take the [ACT](#) and/or the [SAT](#). The colleges to which you apply may also require you to take placement or achievement tests so that they can determine whether you need additional coursework.

Are GED graduates eligible for financial aid for college?

- Federal monies are available to GED recipients as they are to traditional high school graduates who meet the eligibility criteria. These requirements usually include demonstrated financial need. A student must be enrolled in an accredited program leading to degrees or certificates. Applicants must be U.S. citizens or eligible noncitizens and must have Social Security numbers. The [U.S. Department of Education' Office of Student Financial Assistance](#) publishes two booklets that you may find helpful:
 - [Funding Your Education](#)
 - [The Student Guide](#)
- Call the Federal Student Aid Information Center, 1-800-4FED AID (1-800-433-3243) Monday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., Eastern time, or write to them at PO Box 84, Washington, DC 20044.
- Additional information on financing your college education can also be found on the [College is Possible](#) web site.
- The [GED Testing Service](#) publishes a [free brochure for GED graduates](#) about finding financial aid and a companion booklet for adult educators.

How do I locate my scores?

- If you took the GED Tests through a [GED Testing Center](#), you should contact your local testing center to get your scores.
- If you took the GED Tests while in the military services, in the Job Corps, or at a correctional institution, your scores may be housed at a location outside [GED Testing Centers](#).

Please consult the list below:

[Active duty U.S. military tested after October 1, 1985](#)
[U.S. military personnel tested overseas after September 1974](#)
[Coast Guard personnel tested after January 1975](#)
[Overseas civilians tested between November 1966 and May 1998](#)
[Ft. Jackson personnel tested after March 1975](#)
[Federal prison inmates tested after 1954](#)
[Michigan prisons inmates tested after 1957](#)
[West Point personnel tested after September 1982](#)
[Canadian military tested between June 1982 and September 1997](#)
[Ft. Hamilton personnel tested after January 1984](#)
[Ft. Knox personnel tested after July 1, 1985](#)
[Ft. Campbell personnel tested after July 1, 1985](#)
[U.S. Veterans who tested at VA Hospitals after October 1989.](#)

[Note: If you tested at any of these locations and would like a transcript request form, please select the bulleted point above that matches your experience.]

What accommodations are available for people with disabilities who want to take the GED Tests?

- For candidates with a documented physical, sensory, emotional, or specific learning disability, test accommodations are available. These accommodations

may be requested by candidates who have disabilities that can be expected to negatively affect the candidate's chances of passing the GED Tests.

- Tests are available in U.S. English-language Braille, U.S. and Canadian English-language audiocassette, and in large print editions. In addition, with documented disability, the following accommodations to the standard testing environment may be made: extended time, supervised breaks, use of an audiocassette edition, calculator, scribe, and, in some instances, a private room for testing. Some accommodations are not permitted—for example, having the questions read out loud to the candidate. The GED Testing Service does not permit the use of a dictionary or a spell checker.
- Each request for accommodation, or for testing session modifications, is considered on an individual basis. To begin the process of requesting an accommodation, a GED candidate should go to the nearest [GED Testing Center](#) and request Form L-15 (for specific learning disabilities and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder) and Form SA-001 (for emotional and physical disabilities). These forms describe the information needed to document the disability. When the form is complete, it should be returned to the [GED Testing Center](#). The [GED Testing Service](#) is available during regular business hours to answer specific questions about policies and procedures.
- Because extended testing hours and special materials are often needed, the first point of contact for the person with a disability or his/her advocate must be the nearest [GED Testing Center](#).

Language Arts, Writing Test Questions

How are the GED Language Arts, Writing Test essays scored?

- Since January 2002, GED Language Arts, Writing Test (Part II) essays have been scored on a 4-point holistic scale.
- Two trained essay readers read each essay and score based on the overall impression. The *overall impression* of each paper is based on five areas:
- Does the paper respond to the assigned prompt—did the candidate use the topic on the test?
- Can the reader see or follow an organized plan for development?
- Are there specific and relevant details to support the paper's focus?
- Are the conventions of language (grammar, usage, and mechanics) generally followed?
- Is the word choice precise, varied, and appropriate?
- The two readers' scores are then averaged. If the essay receives a score of **2** or higher, the essay score is combined with the multiple-choice score to form a composite. If a candidate receives a score of **1** or **1.5** on the essay, there will be no composite score, and the candidate **must retake both the essay and multiple-choice portion**.

NOTE: Please note that individual essay scores are not reported. On the composite score, the multiple-choice score results represent 65 percent of the composite, and the essay score represents 35 percent.

Essay readers may not be more than one point apart in their scoring. In those cases where the readers are more than one point apart, the Chief

Reader for the scoring site will set the score by agreeing with the reader whose score follows the GED Testing Service scale.

What is the passing score for the essay?

- A GED candidate must earn a score of **2** or higher on the Language Arts, Writing Test, Part II essay in order to receive a composite score and obtain a passing score.
- A candidate needs a score of **2** or higher to earn a passing score. States may set a composite passing score (multiple-choice and essay) that is higher than the current minimum GED passing score of 410. The composite passing score cannot be set lower than the GED Testing Service standard score.

When I receive my Language Arts, Writing Test score, how can I tell if I earned a score of 2 or higher on my essay?

- If you received a score on your transcript in the range of 200-800, you would have earned at least a score of **2** (minimum passing score on the 4-point scale) on your essay.
- If you received a double (**) asterisk on your transcript, then you did not earn a **2** on your essay. **Note:** A single asterisk (*) indicates that you did not write on the assigned topic, and your response was recorded as "off topic."
- If it was your essay score that kept you from passing, you will still have to retake both parts of the Language Arts, Writing Test. We highly recommend that you seek some additional preparation before retaking any of the GED Tests. You may want to check the [Steck-Vaughn web site](#) or those of other commercial publishers.
- GED candidates can find other preparation guides at their local libraries, bookstores, and on such commercial Web sites as www.amazon.com.

How do GED essay readers score papers? What do they consider the most important elements of good writing?

- Good writing needs a focus, organization, and development with specific and relevant examples, details, explanations, etc. You'll see these elements at the top of our scoring grid. Our readers are especially concerned with the development that supports a focus. They do not, however, look for specific errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics—they don't score with the same elements in mind that a classroom teacher would.
- Errors in grammar, etc. would affect a score only if they are so numerous and hinder the reader from understanding and following the writer's ideas. Consequently, writers need to minimize errors, so these mistakes don't distract the readers from the ideas in the paper.

What will the essay topic ask me to do? Can I find out what past topics have been on the writing test? Do I need any prior preparation for the essay?

- Candidates will be asked to write on a topic of general interest. The topics are brief and generally ask candidates to state their views and support with examples from their own observation, knowledge, or experience.
- We don't release our topics; however, Steck-Vaughn—the adult education publisher who produces our Official GED Practice Tests—offers materials to

help GED teachers and candidates. For example, their *Official Practice Test Administrator's Manual* contains two GED topics, anchor papers for each topic, and 10 to 15 sample essays with commentary. Steck-Vaughn also produces a CD-ROM developed by the GED Testing Service to train teachers how to score their students' papers using the 4-point scale. You may want to check [Steck-Vaughn's web site](#).

- GED candidates can find other preparation guides at their local libraries, bookstores, and through such commercial Web sites as www.amazon.com.

When I took the Official GED Practice Test, I found that the essay question was not really a question. Why?

- Although called the "Essay Question," this is really a **prompt**—designed to do just that, prompt you, or help you begin to write about a topic. All of our topics are general enough that you will only need your own knowledge, experience, or observations to respond. The topics are expository in nature.

Does the GED Testing Service offer programs to help prepare GED candidates to write essays for the Language Arts, Writing Test? Where can I get help with writing essays?

- We develop the tests for use in U.S. states and Canadian provinces. The GED Testing Service does not offer test preparation. We strongly urge you, especially if you have been away from academic writing for some time, to enroll in a review course and take the Official GED Practice Test so that you can get feedback on your writing. There are several study guides available in local bookstores and libraries.
- You may also want to check this GED web site (also accessible via www.gedtest.org); go to the page for "Prospective Test Takers," then click on "Preparation," then click on "Materials." Or you may call 1-800-636-9433 (1-800-62MYGED) to locate the Official GED Testing Center nearest you. The center's staff can tell you where to find an instructional program.

The older form of the GED Writing Skills Test provided a recommended word count for the essay. How long does my essay have to be now?

- Your essay score is not based on a word count. So you will not necessarily fail if you have fewer than 200 words. For the 2002 Series GED Tests, the suggested word count was omitted. The word count was intended as a guide, not a requirement. However, we found examinees focusing more on the count than the presentation and development of ideas.
- The only requirement for the essay's length is that it **must be written** on the two sides of the answer sheet. Essay readers **will not read additional pages**.

Writing textbooks will not always agree on the same point. For example, one book will tell writers to use a comma after each item in a series (e.g. coffee, eggs, juice, and toast), but another book might tell writers to omit the last comma before the conjunction (e.g. coffee, eggs, juice and toast.). Which is correct? Will essay readers give me a lower score?

- Both of the comma-use instances that you cite are correct. Most English teachers will agree that the comma before the "and" is optional; however, the writer must be consistent. If the writer omits the comma before "and," he must

omit it every time there are three or more items in a series. Likewise, if the comma is used, the writer must use it in all cases. *Consistency is the key.*

- When our trained readers are reading the essays for a score, they are looking for an overall impression, not individual errors. Grammar, usage, and mechanics errors will affect a reader's score if there are a sufficient number of errors that collectively make it difficult for the reader to understand or follow the writer's ideas. Therefore, the two applications of the comma for the last item in a series would not affect the reader's score.
- As a side note, multiple-choice items on Language Arts, Writing, Part I will not test the comma use between the next to last item and the last item. However, the comma between items one and two (in a series of three or more items) will be tested.

The GED Testing Service essay scoring guide refers to "the conventions of EAE." What is EAE?

- Edited American English (EAE) is fundamentally the same as Standard Written English (SWE), i.e., those conventions of grammar, usage, and mechanics that writers and speakers adhere to in order to communicate effectively. In planning ahead for the 2002 Series GED Tests in 1997, the Writing Test Specifications Committee aligned itself with the National Council of Teachers of English, who use EAE as the norm for the variety of English that is most used by educated speakers of the language.
- For writers, the significance is that they must still employ a style, grammar, and usage that allows a mutual level of comprehension and understanding among educated speakers and writers. For example, EAE still governs when to use *who* or *whom*, *is* or *are*, pronoun forms, verb form and verb tense, adjective or adverb forms, parallel constructions, and sentence structure. Basically, only the name has changed.
- One reason for the change is perception. (Any writing that is *not standard* is, therefore, perceived by many as *substandard*.) The Writing Test Specifications Committee wanted to remove any impediment that may have negative impact on a candidate's performance. The changeover to the term EAE offsets any negative impact that a candidate may feel if his or her writing is interpreted as *substandard*.